

Chapter 13

Usability of Digital Resources: A Study of Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library University of Agriculture Makurdi

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ABSTRACT

The chapter basically examined usability of digital library resources in Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library University of Agriculture Makurdi, Nigeria. The population for the study comprised of the entire library staff of the Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library University of Agriculture Makurdi. Sample for the study was 118 respondents drew from population of the library staff. Data was collected using structured question. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics; precisely arithmetic mean. Findings revealed that there are different types of library resources digitized in Francis Sulemanu Idachaba library. There are also criteria used for the selection of digitized library resources while there are challenges associated with the process of digitization of library resources of Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library of University of Agriculture Makurdi. The chapter concluded that latest advancement in the field of information technology have compelled libraries to embrace automation because the facilities provided by automated libraries go far beyond the activities of traditional libraries. It was recommended that the library management should provide effective solution to the problems faced in the digitization unit by purchasing more equipment for the services such as digital camera, Photoshop software, a standby generating set, standardization on the supplied paper size and CD-ROMs, upgrading of the systems in other to meet the needs of modern day's technologies.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2463-3.ch013

INTRODUCTION

All libraries were established for the purpose of acquiring information resources and making them available for their customers. Due to the fragile nature of some library resources, their age, values, type of chemical components or materials used for the production, sizes and shapes of information resources could really determine the condition under which they could be stored. The need for storage and preservation of electronic resources also required specialized methods and skills to be able to preserve its values and contents. Meanwhile, for the purpose of preserving contents of valuable resources in the libraries, this opened up different ways, ideas and methods of preservation of library resources in all form. Association of Research Libraries (ARL) (1995) defines digital libraries as libraries whose collections are all stored in digital format and accessible via computer, the internet.

This digital content can be stored locally or be accessible remotely. Furthermore, Pearow (2000) defines a digital library as: “a library in which a significant proportion of the resources are available in machine readable format accessible by means of computers. The digital contents may be locally held or accessed remotely via computer networks. Reitz (2007) opined that in the libraries process of digitization began with the catalog, moved to periodical indexes and abstracting services, then to periodicals and large reference works and finally to book publishing.

Association of Research Libraries (1995) further emphasized that digital library is not a single entity and therefore required technology to link the resources of many, the linkage between digital libraries and information services are transparent to end users, also, digital collections are not limited to document surrogates and therefore extends to digital artifacts formats. With the above description by Association of Research Libraries (1995), it suggests that digital library can also be referred to as electronic library or virtual library since their collections can both be accessed electronically via internet resources. Having all these resources at its disposal suggest that virtual library is not only exciting but also an improvement of what obtains in the past due to better utilization of resources and faster speed of accessibility. In agreement with the above statement, Cleveland (1998) referred to digital libraries as organizations that provide resources such as specialized staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to interpreters, distribute, preserve the integrity of and ensure the persistent over time of collections of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use by a defined community or set of community.

This suggests that digital libraries specifically required both the skills of librarians as well as those of computer scientists to be able to contribute their part for the libraries to achieve their goals. Without specialized skilled librarians who are adequately trained to use the digitization resources, the process may not function well. Digital libraries may not need to be a single, completely digital system that provides instant access.

The World Wide Web (www) is a powerful platform for providing access to multimedia information. Consequently, the WWW has been used as the platform for the deployment of digital libraries (DLs). The concept of digital library refers to collections of electronic resources consisting of text, audio, visual, graphics, and animations in nature that are accessible through the aid of digital technologies. Ideally, a digital library should provide users access to electronic information resources via electronic means. However, this definition also includes electronic resources (such as databases on standalone PCs, information on CD-ROMs, etc.) that may not be accessible through the Internet or other networks. Digital library collections may be born (digital originated or through the process of digitisation from existing print materials).

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